

PRESIDENT ROBAK: Senator Chambers.

SENATOR CHAMBERS: Thank you, Senator Schimek. Madam President, members of the Legislature, I will continue. "Barney Fag" is the epithet whispered in the cloakroom. It's the slur hissed in the barroom. It is Barney Frank demonized and debased. Dick Army and friends are hardly alone in their hidden hatred though. It's not exactly a secret that "Barney Fag" is, in fact, how gay people in this country are routinely referred to in private conversation. Barney Frank is how we refer to gays in public when we are on our best behavior, when our conscience is working to keep our baser instincts in check. "Barney Fag" is how we refer to gays in the back room under our breath when our conscience isn't looking. Barney Frank is what we say when the microphone is on and the camera is rolling. "Barney Fag" is what we whisper when the mike and the camera are switched off and even sometimes when they're not. Barney Frank is the conscious. "Barney Fag" is the subconscious. Barney Frank is the smooth appearance. "Barney Fag" is the ugly truth. It's interesting that Dick Army, Newt's Texas sidekick, has been accused of a deliberate act of bigotry when he verbally stumbled, as he insists, during an interview with broadcasters. Although he immediately corrected his mispronunciation of Frank's name and personally apologized to Frank, the charge against Army stands. Hate speech the New York Times called it. Well, I'm willing to concede Army the issue of intent. I do think there's a difference between a planned verbal assault and a gaff and I do think the outrage from some quarters is verging on the sanctimonious. Is the Times feeling guilty? But I also think that Army is blatantly lying when he asserts, "I would never use the kind of slur I am being charged with." I think he is being badly disingenuous when he insists he's "sorry for even the perception that I would think in such terms." In uttering "Barney Fag" and using the private term in a public context, Army actually hit an apex of honesty to which few politicians ever come close. He stumbled all right into the truth, however unintentionally. He raised the curtain on the back room and exposed the hatred that exists therein. However, inadvertently, he brought "Barney Fag" out of the closet. The real shame of this incident is that Barney Frank has once again been forced to endure such nonsense and such affront that his face and his name and his public persona are again defined by his sexuality. The man is smart, the man is funny, the man works hard. He believes in justice and his actions bear out his beliefs. He is a good congressman. If only he could be known for that in both public